

Cave of Secrets

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Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE AND THEMES

Set in turbulent years of the 17th century, William Flynn and his family enjoy a comfortable life by Roaring Water bay.

As a Catholic he is painfully aware of the challenges for the family's advancement in Ireland and he is prepared to do anything to secure their position, including arranging a favourable marriage for his daughter to a man who is three times her age.

His relationship with his son is strained, however his long business absences allow Tom the freedom to explore the bay and its secrets in defiance of his father's wishes.

Driven by resentment, Tom finds acceptance with those he meets in the bay and in the process uncovers a long hidden family secret.

It is a powerful story of frustration and family loyalty. The themes include:

- Adventure
- Family loyalty
- Greed
- Becoming an adult
- Courage
- Forgiveness
- Self discovery
- Parent-child relations

SUMMARY

Stung by his father's threats and treatment of him, Tom flees the house. Taking no care where his direction takes him, he stumbles from the cliff path onto the beach at Roaring Water Bay.

Unable to find a way back, he curls up in a cave to await his fate. Destiny intervenes in the shape of Donal and Maura, two local children who are working on the beach.

Despite a cautious introduction, Tom becomes friends with Donal and Maura. As their friendship develops he is drawn

into their family and community, finding himself accepted and supported in his journey from child to adult; something his father has never supported.

Increasingly his parallel lives as Tom and Tomás fuse until the connection between his mother and Donal's father is revealed.

In his efforts to secure the family's fortune William Flynn has made unwise alliances which threaten to destroy him completely and is only when Tom persuades Donal's father Muiris to help that they are saved from catastrophe.

APPROACH

The guide is presented in three main sections to facilitate the flow of the action and development of the characters and themes.

The main themes of the story address the issues around the relationships within a family and the consequences and feeling they can evoke.

Individual responses will be effective for all the activities however group discussion will prime and support greater depth to their responses and present the opportunity to engage more effectively with the story.

Section 1 The Growing Storm pp 11-90

SUMMARY

Roaring Water Bay had always been forbidden territory for Tom, however today, his anger and fear of his father has driven caution from his mind as he races along the cliff top until tumbling headlong down the slope he finds himself trapped in a bay without any apparent means of escape.

Tom's father William had returned from a trip to Dublin laden with expensive presents for his sisters while dismissing Tom with a roughly crafted present of a child's hobby horse. He also announced that he had made a marriage match for his eldest daughter Elizabeth that he hoped would advance the family fortune and ordered the servants to make preparations for a great feast in honour of Richard Boyle, the Earl of Cork who will be his guest.

When Tom tries to comfort his sister Elizabeth, horrified at the prospect of an arranged marriage, his efforts are rejected and he attracts the attention of his father instead. Ducking the swinging fists, he flees towards the bay.

Gathering his wits after his tumble down the cliff slope, he discovers a cave and meets Donal who is guarding a secret in the dark recesses of the cave.

Donal escorts him to a safe trail from the bay and they agree to meet again in three days time.

Next morning Tom awakens to the devastation in the aftermath of his father's party and takes advantage of the distraction to visit the bay again.

Returning to rendezvous with Donal, their friendship develops. He learns that his father Muiris is a chieftain and he meets Maura, Donal's little sister who overwhelms him with her charm and chatter.

While Elizabeth prepares for her wedding, Tom delights in the freedom of the bay, even finding the courage to teach himself to swim.

As their friendship grows, Donal reveals that his family are smugglers and when Tom asks to join them Donal agrees to speak to his father.

In Dublin, William Flynn is discovering

that the political climate is changing and allegiances are shifting. Desperate to save his land from confiscation he is frustrated in his efforts to secure an audience with Richard Boyle, the Earl of Cork.

Tom is thrilled as Donal leads him to the village and finds that he is accepted by Muiris. At a subsequent meeting, Muiris acknowledges that their business is smuggling and offers Tom the opportunity to join them, displaying a curious interest in Tom's parents and Roaring Water house where he lives.

When his father returns in a foul mood, Tom is persuaded to take advantage of Muiris' offer and seeing the signal from his bed chamber he slips out of the house to seek adventure on the bay.

Wrapped in the icy darkness of the bay, Tom's mission on his first smuggling trip is to observe, however when his enthusiasm bubbles over threatening catastrophe, he is firmly reminded to wait and watch.

William Flynn's mood has grown darker and with the threat of eviction growing he decides to leave for Dublin again.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (**Read pp 17**) Love is not a consideration for Elizabeth when choosing a marriage partner. Her father has chosen for her. In many cultures today this is still common. Are there any advantages in this type of arrangement? Is it reasonable for parents to want to influence who their daughter or son marries.
- (**Read p 22**) Donal challenges Tom's assertion that he is Irish because he speaks the language of the Sasanach. What do you think makes a person Irish? Is it being able to speak the language or being born in Ireland? Can everyone who lives here be called Irish? Can the diaspora call themselves Irish even though they do not live here?
- (**Read p 73**) Muiris and his sept are smugglers. It is essential that they are discrete and secretive, yet he reveals their work to Tom and allows him to join them. Why do you think he has decided to trust him so quickly? What is it about Tom and his relationship with Donal and Maura that convinces him?
- (**Read p 89**) William Flynn is distraught at the prospect of confiscation of his property for no reason other than he is catholic. The law is obviously unfair and biased. In these circumstances do you think that William is under

any obligation to uphold them? What obligations and responsibilities do you think we have today if we or others consider a law to be unfair? Can a law be a law without everyone's agreement?

ACTIVITIES

1. Thank You: (Read p14)

Tom has been given a completely unsuitable present from his father. Have you ever been given a present that you didn't really want?

Can you describe the most unexciting present that you have ever been given? Describe all the details of it and your own reaction explaining how you managed to hide your disappointment and say "Thank you".

2. Drink Tea: (Read p15)

The East India Company is trying to encourage people to buy their new product, **Tea**, and develop the habit of drinking it. They have asked for your help in organising and running a promotion campaign.

Can you suggest three strategies they could use and design a poster that will encourage people to become tea drinkers?

Try this site for useful background.
www.tea.co.uk/east-india-company

3. Tom: (Read p 19)

Tom lived long before the time of photographs; however it was very popular at that time for people to have miniature portraits of themselves painted. To impress his friends, William commissions a miniature of Tom.

Do you think that you could create one for him?

There is some useful background on this site. histclo.com/chron/c1600.html

4. Learning Intentions:

(Read p 35)

Every lesson in school should now have learning intentions. These are brief statements describing what you should know when the lesson is over.

What do you think Tom's learning intentions might be for 'Gentlemanly deportment'?

You can work in small groups to create a list of 8 intentions, and then individually edit this to a short list of 3 key skills.

These will be the skills needed in order to

equip Tom to behave as a gentleman.

What skills do you think you might need today to be a gentleman?

5. Gaelige: (Read pp 27)

As Tom becomes familiar with Donal's community he tries to use more Irish expressions / words / phrases.

Do you think that you could compile a list of 25 words / expressions that he could use and explain the context of how and where they might be used?

Are there any expressions that he should avoid?

You can try this site for some ideas.

www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/irish.php

6. Roaring Water Bay: (Read pp45 & 46)

Tom is fascinated at the variety of marine life in the waters of the bay.

That evening when he gets home, he tries to compose a short poem to express and celebrate his sense of wonder at what he has discovered and learned from Donal.

Do you think that you could help him to compose a suitable Haiku or Cinquain?

These sites might be useful:

www.primaryresources.co.uk/english/englishC7c.htm
www.cinquain.org/theory.html

7. Father: (Read p 55)

That evening Donal spoke to his father Muiris. Muiris was a kind man but cautious; as a smuggler he needed to be.

Donal chose his words carefully to describe Tom, how they met and why he trusts him.

What do you think he said to his father to convince him? What questions do you think his father asked him?

Could you work in small groups to create the dialogue that might have taken place between them?

8. My Lord Deputy: (Read p61)

William is distraught at the prospect of losing his land and decides to write personally to the Lord Deputy Thomas Wentworth.

He will need a lot of help with the letter. He has to calculate the correct tone and describe Boyle's injustice in a way that will capture Wentworth's attention. He

also has to suggest how helping him might disadvantage Boyle and advance the King's cause.

Do you think you could help him to compose the letter?

9. Rigged fore and aft: (Read p 85)

Tom is fascinated by the design of the ships and Seamus tells him how they can be recognised by their rigging.

Tom decides to create a rigging and ship chart using silhouette to help him remember what he has been told.

Do you think that you could help him to compile a chart?

There are some useful images on these sites:
www.thepirateking.com/ships/ship_types.htm
consejo.bz/Pirates/pirate_ships.html

10. Who is William Flynn? (Read p 80)

William is a man who is difficult to understand. He can be kind and cruel in equal measure.

Do you think that you could draw a sketch of him and then imagine that everyone who knows him from his family to his servants and friends makes two comments about him; one positive and one negative?

Write these comments in two separate columns and then try to write a profile of him using a positive and negative comment in each sentence.

You can use an online Thesaurus to find synonyms for conjunctions like 'however' to help you.

thesaurus.com/browse/however

Section 2 False Hopes pp 91 - 174

SUMMARY

Safely returned from the bay, Tom delivers his booty of spices to cook who uses it to make a reviving drink for his mother.

His father has left for Dublin and a gathering storm confines Tom to home.

When the storm exhausts itself, Tom returns to the bay and seeks out Donal and Maura and makes himself useful by helping out in their village.

When Tom leaves to go home, Donal is left to examine the differences in their lives.

Life in Roaring Water House settles into a pattern of anticipation as Mrs Flynn and the girls wait anxiously for a letter from William.

His second smuggling trip sees Tom take the oars and a more active role. Bobbing in the darkness in the lee of Dún na Séad, he listens as Muiris mysteriously tells the story of Sir Fineen Ó Driscoll, a story of cunning and ultimate betrayal by the Sasanach.

Venturing further into the bay beyond Dún an Óir, conditions worsen as a storm develops. When they make their rendezvous, Muiris insists that he alone board the ship.

Huddling for shelter in the lee of the ship the two currachs wait. After what seems an age a net swings over the side of the ship and the cargo is distributed between the currachs. Untying one of the bags, the cargo is revealed as gold bullion.

With the gold safely hidden, both crews and Tom return home undetected.

As Autumn approaches, the sojourns in the bay are suspended. Storms and the arrival of his tutor curtail Tom's freedom and restrict him increasingly to home.

There is still no letter from William Flynn and as Mrs Flynn becomes increasingly anxious, her behaviour becomes more withdrawn, much to the concern of her daughter Caroline, frustrated that she seems to be the only one to have noticed.

Maura is at a loss to explain Tom's absence and believing that he has grown cold in his affections for her, she determines to visit him and discover the truth. Her arrival at Roaring Water House causes confusion and provokes a curiously shocked reaction from Mrs Flynn. Tom deflects further inquiry as he offers to escort her back home, offering a plausible explanation of a friendship with Donal as the reason for her incursion.

In Dublin, William Flynn is distraught with frustration at his inability to gain the audience at the Castle that will allow him to protect his family's fortune. A chance meeting with Boyle's son presents the opportunity to secure the introductions that he needs.

The doctor is called for Mrs Flynn as her condition is causing concern; however Tom, when he witnesses his mother being 'bled' explodes in fury and evicts the doctor vowing that he will never be allowed to return.

Tom spends more time at home with his mother and learns the good news that his father is about to gain a commission from the Lord Deputy, which will hopefully secure their futures.

Relief eases through Roaring Water House as they prepare for Christmas, however Tom longs to see Donal and his family and despite the weather, determines to visit them on St Stephen's day.

Poor conditions cause Tom to lose his footing and he falls, breaking his leg. Maura and Donal hear his cries and he is rescued. They carry him to their cottage where Bríd, their mother who is a healer, cares for his injury.

When Tom fails to return, the house and grounds are searched. Donal and Maura who are bringing news of Tom's injury are discovered. They are brought to Mrs Flynn who questions them and agrees to Tom staying with them until he is well.

Her daughters are disturbed by their mother's strange reaction, however she is determined that Tom stays where he is and when Donal and Maura return home they relate all that they saw.

Under Bríd's care Tom is recovering, however an unusual dilemma presents itself and a dark secret begins to rumble uncomfortably. Who will escort Tom home and why would it be unwise for Muiris to do so?

In Roaring Water House, Mrs Flynn awaits Tom's return and when she receives a letter from her husband indicating a turn of good fortune, a bright future for them all is promised.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- (Read pp 102-103): When Donal considers the advantages that Tom has and compares them to his own situation you could understand if he were jealous. He is not and after a few minutes returns to his task. Why do you think he did not become soured by jealousy? How did his beliefs and background prevent him yielding to the temptation to be jealous? Does his behaviour teach us any lessons?
- (Read p 112-114): Muiris tells a tale that reveals a legacy of old injustice. He is bitter and distrustful and his feelings have coloured his attitude to all Sasanachs. Do you think that stories from long ago can help to heal division or do they only encourage prejudice? Would it be better to simply forget them all?

- **(Read p 162):** Cowed for a long time by illness and circumstance, Mrs Flynn suddenly decides to exercise her authority and take control of the situation, making decisions forcefully. What do you think has brought about this change in her behaviour? Why has she decided do you think that no one is to visit Tom?
- **(Read p 168):** His injury and the thought of his parent's anger have robbed Tom of his new found independence making him feel insecure again. What do you think that Tom should do to regain his feeling of independence? How do you think that his injury affected the way he thought about himself? Is it important to have a good self image and how can you develop and protect your own self image?

ACTIVITIES

1. Folk Remedies: (Read p 93)

Cook has the recipe to prepare 'Sack Posset' in the hope that it will strengthen Tom's mum.

There are many folk recipes in Ireland that are believed to cure sickness and restore health.

Do you think that you could research and discover an old remedy that was used in your family?

Can you find any modern remedies that are similar to the old ones?

2. The Grass is Greener: (Read p 103)

Both Tom and Donal find aspects of each others' lives more attractive than their own. Can you work in small groups to imagine what Donal might find most attractive in Tom's life and then vice versa?

Can you help them to identify 5 advantages in the other's life and then decide which one they might choose as the most important? Try to justify the choice with a reason.

3. The Oar: (Read p 106)

When Tom takes the oar which has been worn smooth by many hands, he is able to feel the pulse of all the men and women before him who gripped that oar.

The oar remembers each hand that gripped it, to whom it belonged, where they went, what they did and the feelings they shared.

Do you think that you could draw the oar

and create a short anthology of 3 separate stories belonging to the different hands that gripped the oar?

4. Dún an Oír: (Read p114)

The National Museum has decided to create a leaflet and erect a plaque to encourage tourists to visit the castle at Dún an Oír.

The leaflet will be available at all tourist offices and the plaque will be mounted on the wall of the castle.

Both will be similar but not identical and will give details and illustrations from the castle's history.

Could you design and create a suitable leaflet and plaque?

You can find useful information on these sites:

www.museum.ie/en/list/antiquities.aspx
www.odriscolls.me.uk/castles.htm

5. Treasure Map: (Read pp 119-120)

Although Muiris is confident he can identify where the bags of gold have been buried, he takes the precaution of having a map drawn in case something happens to him.

The map must give the location of the correct island in the bay and the treasure sites; in addition it will be coded so that only a few can decipher it.

He asks Tom to create the map. Do you think that you could help?

6. Maura: (Read p 127)

When Mrs Flynn meets Maura on the stairs she is shocked. Maura however is bubbly and unselfconscious, initiating a conversation that quickly becomes an interrogation. There is so much that she wants to know.

Could you write the dialogue that happened between them?

7. Are you an Idiom? (Read pp 136,169,174)

Idioms are expressions that allow the author to say something in a concise and colourful way. Can you find the 3 idioms that the author uses and explain what they mean?

Do you think that you could create an illustration for each of them?

You can use the site below to find three additional idioms that the author might have used.

Can you decide who might use them, what context they would use them and what they might intend to say?

www.childrensuniversitymanchester.ac.uk/interactives/languages/words/idioms/

8. The diary: (Read p133-137)

Robert Boyle is in the habit of writing a diary and likes to record the events and encounters of each day.

His meeting with William Flynn was both unusual and unexpected and he made quite a lengthy entry to describe Flynn, his predicament and his own impression of him.

Do you think that you could recreate the entry? What day / date will you choose?

9. First Aid: (Read p153)

Donal and Maura are first to reach Tom who is clearly seriously injured. There are a number of things they should do to ensure that they do not make his injury worse.

Do you think that you could use your knowledge of First Aid to create a little help sheet for them to use?

You can find some helpful information on these sites:

www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/First-aid/Everyday-First-Aid
www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Teaching-packages/Microsite/Life-Live-it-first-aid-education-for-children/Help-save-lives

10. Who are you? (Read p161)

Mrs Flynn questions Donal and Maura both closely and gently. She is anxious to learn as much about them and their family as she can. The author seems to suggest that there is a hidden reason behind this.

The author has now decided to include the dialogue that took place between the three of them.

Do you think that you could help her to create the dialogue that took place? Remember that Maura is a very cheerful and animated child and this will be clear both in what she says and how she says it.

Section 3 Deliverance pp 175 - 260

SUMMARY

Tom's leg has healed and it is time to

return home. Accompanied by Muiris he makes his way to Roaring Water House where his mother on seeing them reveals the secret that Muiris is her eldest brother and Donal and Maura are their cousins.

When Muiris left, the spell that hung over the house from his sudden appearance is broken by a clatter of hoof beats and the cry that William Flynn has returned.

Flynn has returned in high spirits with a company of companions and the news that he had received a commission in the Lord Lieutenant's army. His stay however is short and his goodwill towards Tom even shorter before he departs again to join King Charles' forces as they attempt to put down a Scottish revolt.

Tom relates all that has happened to Muiris and hears a cautionary tale on the duplicity of the Crown.

When Tom returns home he raises the subject of Muiris and suggests his mother visit him; reluctantly she agrees, however when she reaches the cottage, emotion overcomes her and Tom has to ask Bríd for help to coax her inside.

Her sympathetic reception and Maura's chatter soothe Tom's mother and she soon becomes comfortable sitting by the hearth with Bríd.

Reunited with her brother Muiris, his family and community, Mrs Flynn returns home and reveals the secret to her daughters, cautioning them not to divulge it to their father yet.

Tom, able now to visit Muiris openly, confesses an ambition to make his living from the sea and Muiris agrees to teach him the skills of navigation. When Donal and Maura insist on joining them, they all set off in high spirits.

Mrs Flynn, Catherine, has received a letter from her husband, sent on the eve of his departure for Scotland to fight against their rebellion, outlining his ambitions and expectations of good fortune after they have defeated the 'wild Scots'.

In the currach on the bay, disaster strikes and Donal and Maura fall overboard. Muiris and his brother Sean are in despair as traditionally none of them can swim, however Tom, who has secretly taught himself to swim enters the hostile waters and rescues both of them. The relief is tangible as they all recover ashore.

Elizabeth terminates her engagement to Herbert Fox.

In Scotland, King Charles' forces have

been routed and William is lucky to escape. With his fortunes in tatters, he makes his way home.

At Roaring water House, Herbert Fox seizes his opportunity to strike. He has managed to buy up the mortgage that William had raised on the house to fund his campaign and has now taken up residence.

The Flynn household are bewildered by his actions and resent his presence but are powerless to evict him. Everyone waits for Mr Flynn's return.

When William returns, he is unable to refute Fox's claim and must tell his family that their home is lost.

In an angry outburst, Tom challenges his father and discovers the reason behind his father's attitude towards him. William Flynn is now utterly defeated and at Fox's mercy.

Tom seeks out Muiris and pleads for his share of the plundered gold to redeem the mortgage. Muiris agrees and escorts him back to Roaring Water House to offer support if needed.

Herbert Fox is holding court and gloating as Tom enters the room. Casually handing the bag of gold to his father control shifts and William is able to redeem the mortgage. Fox' plans are dashed. He is paid and then evicted.

Celebration seals the story as Tom and his father see each other in a new light.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **(Read p183):** William Flynn expected his wife's father to provide a dowry and he himself had agreed to pay Herbert Fox to marry his own daughter Elizabeth. Do you think that Virginia is correct in saying that "girls are traded like animals"? Why do you think that this was acceptable and do you think it was reasonable?
- **(Read p214):** Donal and Maura have fallen into the water and are in danger of drowning. None of the adults can swim. This was a conscious choice they made so that if they fell overboard they would not delay the inevitable unnecessarily. Do you think that this was a sensible choice? How would you argue against their decision?
- **(Read p 221):** Tom is unable to rationalise why he learned to swim when he is asked. It was a dangerous thing for him to do. He also wants to continue smuggling which again is a

dangerous enterprise. Why do you think that people are attracted to danger? Do you think it is necessary for us all to have an element of danger in our lives?

- **(Read p 229):** Herbert Fox is confident that the truth of the situation can easily be manipulated. Do you think it is easy to manipulate the truth? Do you think that people really are that easy to mislead? Why do you think that people sometimes allow themselves to be fooled? What strategies can be used to convince people to believe things more easily?

ACTIVITIES

1. The Conversation: *(Read p 192)*

Tom is angry with the comments of his fathers' guests. The author had considered continuing the conversation at this point and developing a dialogue. Do you think that you could create an interesting dialogue? The guests will make uncomplimentary remarks which Tom will rebut. What do you think that they might say to each other?

2. Be Careful: *(Read p 195)*

Despite his father's attitude towards him, Tom feels that he must try to warn him to be careful and not to trust the Sasanach. He must choose his words carefully otherwise his warning will be dismissed and he must be careful how he reveals the source of the warning. Do you think that you could help him to write the letter to his father?

3. The Cabin: *(Read p 199)*

When they reached the cabins, Mrs Flynn began to cry. The cottages were as she remembered them. Every detail was clear in her memory. Do you think that you could paint the picture of what she saw?

4. The Speech: *(Read p 200)*

Before she left home, Mrs Flynn had written a short note of what she wanted to say to her brother. She intended to leave the note at the cabin if there was no one at home there. In the confusion of the rain and her upset, the note falls from her coat and is hidden behind a stool. Next morning, Maura finds it and begins to read it.

What do you think it said? Do you think that you could write the note that she left?

5. Who are you:
(Read pp 201-205)

Tom's mother introduces herself as Mrs William Flynn, however Bríd recognises her as Catriona. Do you think that they are really the same person? How do you think that Mrs Flynn and Catriona might be similar?

What are the differences between them? Think about how each of them might behave, what opinions they might have, what type of feeling they might have. Can you decide what each of them might think of the other?

You could use two columns, one for each of them. You can work in small groups for this activity. Imagine that you are one of them and then the other and decide what each of them might think of each other. You can also add whatever similarities and differences that you think there are between them.

6. Footprints:
(Read pp 201- 202)

Tom tries to comfort his mother by explaining that just as the tide removes footprints, so too her regrets can be erased.

Can you draw a series of 5 footprints and write into each of them a specific regret that you think Mrs Flynn might have. Can you then explain what the tide might be that will wipe them all away?

7. Roaring Water House:
(Read p 211)

If William Flynn's adventure in Scotland had been successful, he intended to sell Roaring Water House. He even employed an estate agent to advertise the house and handle the sale.

The agent has commissioned a miniature painting of the house and prepared a poster to advertise the house in Dublin.

Can you decide what the poster might have included and how it described the house? You can use an A3 sheet to make a copy of it.

8. Listen to me Bríd:
(Read p 222)

That evening, Muiris has to tell Bríd about the boating accident. He wants to hide nothing, yet he does not want to distress her unnecessarily. How do you think he would begin? What words would he choose? What questions might she ask?

Do you think that you could write the dialogue that took place between them? Be careful to describe how they spoke and listened. You could perform it in pairs for the rest of the class.

9. The Guest: (Read p 235)

Herbert Fox refuses to leave, despite the family and staff giving him every hint of their displeasure and employing every

trick they can think of to annoy him.

Do you think that you could suggest three foolproof tricks that they could use that would be guaranteed to drive him from the house?

Can you explain why you think they might work and what you think his reaction to them might be?

10. Muiris and William:
(Read p 254-259)

Some time later, after things have returned to normal, William Flynn decides to meet Muiris to thank him.

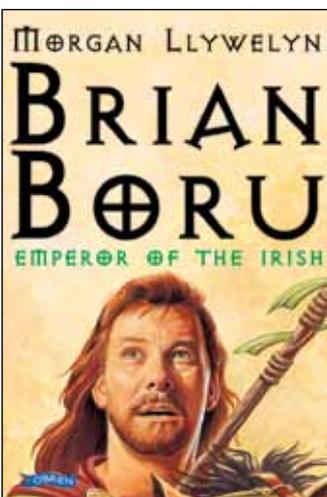
At first the conversation is awkward, but as both men begin to talk about Tom, the tension between them eases and William gets a glimpse of his son's bravery and Muiris' genuine affection for him.

The author has tried several drafts for this dialogue but can't seem to get the correct tone for it.

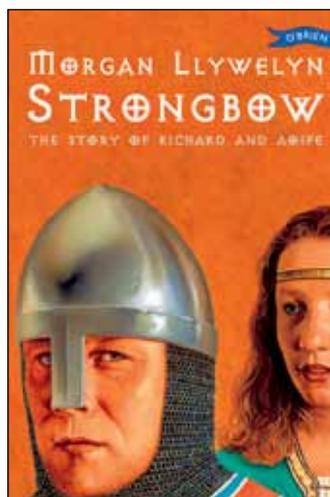
Do you think that you could help her to write it?

Remember to describe the thoughts and feelings of the two men and how these change as the conversation develops.

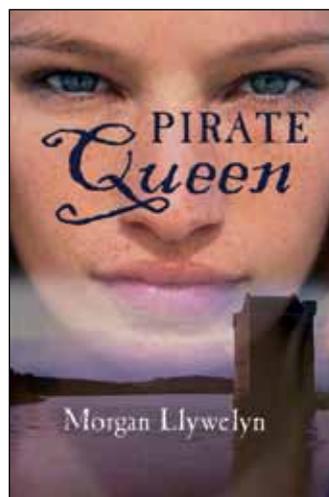
Also by Morgan Llywelyn



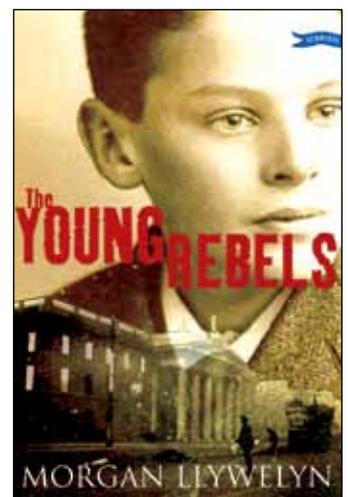
1014: The High King of Ireland faces the biggest challenge of his life in the Battle of Clontarf.



1172: The Norman invasion of Ireland. Told in alternating chapters by Strongbow and Aoife, the wilful Irish princess destined to become his wife.



Granuaile, pirate queen and thorn in the side of Queen Elizabeth's reign in Ireland. An enthralling view on a world long gone.



1916: St Enda's was no ordinary school: taught by Padraig Pearse himself, John Joe gets drawn into the Easter Rising.